

President's Message

Rick Wickstrom, PT, DPT, CPE, CME

Our first virtual Combined Sections Meeting was a pivot that inspired new learning and networking options for students and physical therapy professionals to move forward. Its reasonable registration cost and flexibility allowed me to experience more programming than usual. For example, I was interested to learn about similarities and differences in applications for core tests of physical performance across sections and academies. Our OHSIG sponsored a timely presentation, "Therapy at Work for Total Worker Health®: Making Magic for the Next 100 Years". The speakers, L. Casey Chosewood, MD, MPH (Director, Office of Total Worker Health at NIOSH) and Kathy Malchev, OTR/L, MPH (Health Services Manager at Disney), provided a refreshing vision of practice opportunities for therapists to meet the needs of business and worker clients. This was relevant to one of our primary OHSIG initiatives to implement an advanced practice educational credential program to recognize expertise of therapists who specialize in occupational health. In the short article that follows, our OHSIG Practice Committee Chair, Lorena Payne describes OHSIG's process to create the Optimizing Worker Performance Clinical Practice Guideline. This has been a 6-year, monumental effort by OHSIG AOPT members. It provides an evidenced-based foundation for the occupational health practice niche, but also provides guidance to supplement CPGs for specific health conditions to reduce the personal and society cost of work disability. Enjoy!

Building A Clinical Practice Guideline

Lorena P. Payne, PT, MPA, OCS

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

What are the components of physical therapy treatment that lead to optimal participation in work by the worker with activity limitations? What tools can be used to estimate the risk of delayed return to work? What interventions are indicated when there is an estimated risk of prolonged disability? What are the unique factors, related to a work-limiting injury or illness, that should be assessed at initial evaluation? When is it appropriate to initiate active intervention to return the worker to optimal functioning? Does a brochure lead to better rate of return to work? A group of physical therapists has sought to answer these questions and more by building a clinical practice guideline (CPG) related to the process of returning the worker to optimal function after injury or illness. Clinical practice guidelines published under the guidance of APTA and various components typically are grounded in the description of body functions and structure and a health condition (disorder or disease). In addition to body functions and structures, physical therapists considering a treatment plan and goals to return the worker to optimal functioning, must place a greater emphasis on contextual factors (environmental and personal factors) and participation in activity, specifically related to employment or occupation. This CPG, *Optimizing Work Participation After Illness or Injury: The Role of*

the Physical Therapist, with an anticipated publishing date later this year, is meant to give evidence-based guidance to physical therapists in these functional domains. It is meant to be used in conjunction with other published CPGs that describe best practice related to specific health conditions.

BUILDING A CPG

Steps in completing a CPG include identifying individuals to participate in a development group; a thorough literature search (3 have been completed for this CPG); abstract review; extraction of data from each of the studies (over 300 references are included); draft the outline; grade the evidence; develop guidelines based upon the literature; write the body of the document; ask for expert, stakeholder, and peer review; edit the CPG related to comments; and submit for publishing. That is a long list; however, the work is not yet done until a plan for dissemination of the information is carried out.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

The information contained in this CPG will be available for APTA components (state chapters and academies) and stakeholder groups (ie, therapy providers, employers, payers, case managers, adjustors, medical providers, regulatory agencies). Individual practitioners will have access to self-assessment tools and continuing education opportunities. The information provides the foundation for advanced practice credentialing coursework to be made available within the next year.

ELEVATE YOUR PRACTICE

Look for your opportunity to review the CPG, *Optimizing Work Participation After Illness or Injury: The Role of the Physical Therapist*, and provide comments. The publishing date is anticipated during this summer 2021, in the *Journal of Orthopaedic and Sports Physical Therapy*. Read and share the published CPG with peers and stakeholders. Participate in advanced credentialing course work through the Occupational Health Special Interest Group of AOPT, for which the CPG serves as a foundation. Invite speakers, designated by the CPG authors, to present the information at component meetings, your state department of labor, or other stakeholder groups.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROCESS

Researching, writing, publishing, and disseminating this clinical practice guideline is a process that has required the help of a large group of experts. Acknowledge those that invested thousands of hours over the past 6 years to see this project through. Upon reading through the published document, seek out the list of individuals that gave their time to be a part of the CPG development group. They are additional resources and mentors, available to elevate your practice in occupational health. Consider participation in the constant update of this living document by joining the group that will add to the evidence as more research is available. Become part of the OHSIG practice or research team. Most of all, consult this guideline as it becomes available and practice with evidence, to return individuals to optimal work ability.